

Doc 2

Towards the next WCC Assembly **Understanding the mandate** **A report from the listening process** **Proposals for moving forward**

I. Porto Alegre Mandate

The Porto Alegre Assembly, meeting in February 2006, articulated the vision of pursuing an “ecumenical assembly that would assemble all churches to celebrate their fellowship in Jesus Christ and to address common challenges facing the church and humanity”, with the particular hope that this would represent a significant step “toward visible unity and a shared Eucharist” (PRC paragraphs 5).

This same vision was further elaborated through the recommendation “to explore the feasibility of a structure for WCC assemblies that would provide expanded space for Christian world communions and confessional families to meet, for the purpose of deliberation and/or overall agenda” (PRC paragraph 25d).

Central Committee – Based on an evaluation of the Porto Alegre assembly and a provisional schedule for preparing the 10th Assembly (Doc GEN 03), the central committee, meeting in September 2006, established a process of listening and reflecting on the Porto Alegre mandate to explore the feasibility an ecumenical assembly, with the expectation that an initial decision would be taken on the type of assembly to be held in 2013 by the central committee when it meets in February 2008, so as to inform preparations from the beginning.

The matter was referred to the executive committee, recommending that “more reflection about the meaning and significance of a ‘common ecumenical assembly’ be undertaken” (joint report of the programme and policy reference committees, paragraph 30).

Executive Committee – The WCC executive committee, meeting in February 2007 received and discussed an initial paper on the topic which raised a series of fundamental questions about language, fellowship and the coherence of the ecumenical movement.

The executive committee began with the assumption that an “ecumenical assembly” will only be feasible if a common vision and language can be found to express the significance of such an event as a visible sign of the churches’ commitment to unity and desire for mutual accountability. A WCC assembly that provides “expanded space for Christian world communions and confessional families” is best pursued in ways that help the churches to grow together in the fellowship they share through membership in the WCC.

The executive committee considered the term “ecumenical assembly” problematic and affirmed that all WCC assemblies are ecumenical by nature. They also affirmed the need to consider potential cooperation not only with Christian world communions, but also with national councils, regional councils, international ecumenical organizations and specialized ministries, i.e. all the stake holders

in an assembly – the affiliated partners sending official representation as per the WCC Constitution and Rules.¹

History of preceding discussions – The Porto Alegre vision of an ecumenical assembly was preceded by nearly a decade of discussion on the possibility of joint or common assemblies between the WCC, WARC and LWF, which all hold similar types of decision-making gatherings every seven to eight years.

The vision was also preceded by nearly a decade of discussion and planning toward Christian forum that would bring together the fellowship of WCC member churches, Christian world communions and churches not holding membership in the WCC, i.e. Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Evangelical. For example, in the working draft of the policy document “Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC” there was a proposal to consider “finding alternative models of an assembly within the context of the forum” to which the WCC would invite other ecumenical organizations, Christian World Communions and churches not holding WCC membership (cf. Working Draft of the Policy Statement, 1996, p.30).²

A comprehensive article describing the history of this dialogue was written by Stephen Brown. The article, ‘Towards a common global ecumenical assembly’ was published in June 2006 by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Reformed World (volume 56, issue 2). *The article is attached as Appendix 01.*

II. Listening Process

In April 2007, at the request of the executive committee and to facilitate the listening process, the general secretary wrote to all WCC member churches, REOs, NCCs, CWCs, IEOs and SMs, requesting feedback on the feasibility a “WCC assembly that would gather all churches and offer expanded space to partner ecumenical organizations”. *The letter is attached as Appendix 02. A list of churches and partners that replied is also attached as Appendix 03.*

In addition to processing written feedback, the WCC secretariat has also sought to take advantage of key ecumenical moments during 2007 so as to more deeply engage the churches and ecumenical partners in responding. These have included:

- January – Annual meeting of REO General Secretaries
- May – WCC Member Churches’ Ecumenical Officers Meeting
- May – Joint Consultative Commission between the WCC and CWCs
- September – WCC Executive Committee
- October – WARC Executive Committee
- November – WCC Permanent Committee on Collaboration and Consensus
- November – Global Christian Forum
- November – Christian World Communions Conference of Secretaries
- November – Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century
- January – Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church

¹ According to WCC Rules, REOs, NCCs, CWCs, IEOs, SMs that are affiliated with the WCC are invited by the Central Committee to send a *delegated representative* to WCC assemblies. Non-member churches, with whom the WCC has a special relationship, may also be invited by the Central Committee to send a *delegated observer* to a WCC assembly. Both *delegated representatives* and *delegated observers* have the right to speak, but not to participate in WCC decision-making processes.

² The “forum” mentioned here refers to was proposed as “forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organisations”, and has subsequently been developed as the Global Christian Forum.

What we heard – The fellowship of WCC member churches that either responded or participated in the ecumenical officers meeting have generally supported the pursuit an expanded assembly and agree with the initial directions outlined in the letter from the general secretary.

The number of world, regional and confessional assemblies was critiqued by some as a financial burden, but more churches critiqued the multiplicity of unrelated processes of preparation and follow up, which was seen as ecumenical fragmentation. Concern was expressed to ensure that small churches and “minority” confessions are not overshadowed by the interest of large churches or institutionally organized church families. The importance of how the participation of partner ecumenical organizations would be encouraged in preparing an expanded assembly was highlighted by many respondents.

A principle concern raised by many churches was the desire to preserve the integrity of a WCC assembly as the principal gathering through which the member churches deepen their mutual accountability in the search for visible unity and set the agenda for the work of the WCC.

What we heard – The Joint Consultative Commission between the WCC and CWCs considered it necessary for the WCC to retain ownership/leadership of an expanded or ecumenical assembly as a WCC event, not so as to pursue institutional interests, but to nurture the ecumenical movement. The communions suggested that the minimal criteria for the event should be:

- To enhance the role of the WCC as a fellowship of churches;
- To enhance the role of the WCC in nurturing the one ecumenical movement;
- To rely on the Basis of the WCC to determine participation (Article I of the WCC Constitution which affirms Christ as Lord and Savior, belief in the Trinity and refers to the authority of scripture.

Some communions expressed the desire for the WCC to be more open to significant change – to transform the *status quo* – so as to do something new and not simply restructure the existing model of a WCC assembly.

What we heard – The Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration discussed the issue, recognizing the value of an expanded assembly in working towards the coherence of the ecumenical movement. The committee affirmed that the ethos of the WCC and fruits of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC should not be put at risk by such an event. They were particularly concerned that such a space could marginalize Orthodox and other churches that are not organized as Christian world communions.

What we heard – The World Alliance of Reformed Churches executive committee responded with support for the initiative, but also expressed concern about a model that would offer communions space for conducting business “after” the WCC assembly had concluded would be unsatisfactory, as it would symbolize a new form of ecumenical fragmentation.

What we heard – The Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions, which met directly after participating in the Global Christian Forum, expressed wide-ranging interest, with some questioning the focus on space for “doing business”. The Reformed and Lutherans expressed concern that the WCC might be moving away from the Porto Alegre vision. The Orthodox expressed concern that the business agendas of other communions could unduly influence the agenda of the WCC. The Anglicans expressed concern that space for doing business will not engage their communion.

The following was heard as the CWCs contribution to the listening the process:

- The value of WCC ownership versus WCC leadership in such an event is not commonly agreed.

- The GCF is the best space to encounter churches that have difficulty to associate with the WCC.
- Various models should be elaborated to identify the one model that is most capable of engaging the widest number of communions.
- Any wider assembly should be planned with the communions most interested.
- For a wider assembly to foster coherence, a greater sense/understanding of the value of complementarity is needed – the complementarity of different models and instruments in promoting unity.
- The WCC should exercise caution in preparing a wider assembly, recognizing that gains in one direction may present risks in another.

What we heard – The Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century, which draws together representatives of WCC member church, REOs, NCCs, IEOs and SMs, discussed the proposal at length. They raised a number of issues that had not yet been articulated, but which are essential for moving forward. The group emphasized the rapidly changing ecumenical context and the need for an expanded assembly to be planned in tune with these dynamics.

The group suggested that coherence can also be described as a process of “gifting” by which each church and ecumenical partner understands its particular gift to the ecumenical movement and how it is enriched by the gifts of other churches. They suggested that complementarity is best achieved by constructing links between churches and partners, not simply expecting them to emerge in a common time and place. Other insights included:

- Fears about pursuing an expanded assembly should not be seen as barriers keeping us from moving forward, but as challenges we are called to overcome.
- An expanded assembly should be an event that brings the ecumenical family together. As such, any space offered to recognized partners, should not be “guest” space, but “family” space.
- Preparing and implementing an expanded assembly with recognized ecumenical partners will necessarily help to articulate common vision about the churches’ search for unity and common witness.
- Though different communion would use the space provided to them in different ways, an expanded assembly should challenge all church families to recognize the diversity that exists within their own communion or confessional grouping of churches.
- An expanded assembly should provide significant opportunity for ecumenical formation and not repeat the pre-assembly model, for youth in particular.
- How would the post-expanded assembly process help to facilitate outcomes, promote coherence and more deeply engage the churches as the primary agents of their ecumenical instruments?
- How will an expanded assembly also be a more inclusive assembly?

III. Possible ways forward

The listening process has revealed many concrete suggestions that indicate a strong interest in moving forward to plan a new kind of assembly – to plan an ecumenical event that would gather the churches more closely with their ecumenical partners. To succeed, such an event should 1) affirm the churches as the primary actors in the search for visible unity and 2) affirm the churches’ ecumenical instruments as the principle servants of the churches’ ecumenical commitments. Such an assembly, in how it is planned, implemented and followed-up, should help to forge a greater coherence of the one ecumenical movement. The WCC is well placed to take the lead in preparing such an ecumenical gathering. The WCC can, at the same time, fulfil the constitutional mandate of gathering the fellowship of churches in a deliberative assembly.

A theological framework

The Common Understanding and Vision (CUV) process developed the two-pronged approach of deepening the fellowship of member churches and broadening participation in the ecumenical movement. This approach has borne significant fruits, which include the results of the Special

Commission on the Participation of Orthodox Churches in the WCC, the implementation of consensus procedures, the work of the Joint Working Group with Pentecostals, renewed relations with Evangelicals and the Global Christian Forum.

Coherence and the unity we seek – The Porto Alegre assembly confirmed that the approach to deep and broaden should continue, but also brought renewed attention to the constitutional role of the WCC to ensure the coherence of the one ecumenical movement (Article III). The desire to deepen the sense of fellowship among member churches and to broaden the cooperation of ecumenical partners as the instruments of the churches are, in fact, two significant means to ensure the coherence of the ecumenical movement and the unity we seek.

Unity through common vision and partnership – Recognizing that the foundation of all ecumenical instruments are the churches themselves, at this stage in the life of the WCC, ensuring the coherence of the one ecumenical movement requires on the one hand, fostering a common vision among churches and ecumenical partners and, on the other hand, facilitating greater programmatic co-operation among ecumenical actors. It requires bringing into more dynamic dialogue the goals of deepening fellowship and broadening participation. In this way, the churches are encouraged in their active ecumenical vocation.

Leadership by the churches through the WCC –The coherence of the one ecumenical movement can be strengthened by the creative and directed interaction among churches and ecumenical partners. The WCC has been repeatedly affirmed by member churches and ecumenical partners as the most equipped, unique and preferred instrument to facilitate this. The WCC can, however, only facilitate this through the leadership of its member churches.

An organisational framework

From the response of both member churches and ecumenical partners, it is clear that such an event should be developed according to criteria already articulated by the WCC Constitution and Rules. This includes criteria to determine who participates and the basic goals for such an event.

Basis of the WCC – The most appropriate basis to determine the churches that could be invited to such an event is the first article of the WCC Constitution, which identifies the WCC as a “fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit”. The churches that would be invited, therefore, are the WCC members churches and sister churches that confess Christ as Lord and Saviour according to the scripture, and profess faith in the Triune God.

Enhancing the fellowship of member churches – One of the fundamental goals of such an event would be to enhance the fellowship of member churches and to engage them in giving direction to the WCC and the wider ecumenical movement. In order to achieve this it is necessary to adhere closely to the vision of CUV and to the recommendation and spirit of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. The distribution of WCC delegates, the ethos of fellowship, the spirit of consensus, the accord of common prayer and confessional Eucharist, must all help to shape the event.

Particular concern should be given to enhancing fellowship with Orthodox churches, small churches and churches not organized as global communions. Many of these churches did not respond to the request for feedback.

Recognized ecumenical partners – Another fundamental goal of such an event would be to foster greater coherence of the one the ecumenical movement. In order to achieve this it is necessary to have the full cooperation and participation of the churches’ conciliar instruments, confessional

instruments, international ministries and agencies. The REOs, NCCs, CWCs, IEOs and SMs, that are constitutionally affiliated with the WCC would be asked to take an increased role in helping to shape and facilitate the event. Their cooperation in the follow up to the event is as crucial.

It is also necessary to consider how to best involve the wider ecumenical movement, including networks, academies, grass-roots organizations, congregations, etc., that are not constitutionally affiliated with the WCC, but which are well known to churches. They have been involved in past assemblies.

Other churches – Still another fundamental goal of such an event would be to foster the participation of churches that are not members of the WCC. Previous assemblies have had significant participation of Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. The preparation of this event would build on this tradition, while seeking also to take advantage of the new possibilities offered by a rapidly changing Christian landscape. This of course depends very much on the responsiveness of “other churches”. Minimally, the assembly should reflect the progress made in building relationship and working collaboratively.

Event framework

The listening process has revealed a number of concrete proposals for how to structure such an event. Not one model seems to meet all needs, but there is a clear convergence of opinion that the best model will be the one that promotes the churches’ ownership of their ecumenical commitments and engages the widest platform of recognized ecumenical partners. The listening process also reveals the challenge for more coordinated forms of preparation, theme and issue development, as well as coherent follow-up. What follows are three different scenarios for moving forward.

Coordinated events at different times and in different places – An “expanded assembly” is not necessarily limited in time and space, but can be developed as a process of ecumenical dialogue in which different assemblies, synods and conferences are encouraged to listen to and respond to one another.

There are already a number of events scheduled between 2010 and 2015 that could be challenged to “plug-in” to an ecumenical event in late 2013 (LWF, WARC, CWME, etc.). The fact that the WCC has advanced the schedule of assembly preparation so that the theme will be set in 2009 and the basic agenda will be articulated by 2011 allows space to invite churches and ecumenical partners meeting prior to 2013 to begin reflecting towards the event as well as to invite churches and ecumenical partners meeting after 2013 to continue making a contribution.

This idea is not new and has born little fruit in the past. However, with a renewed approach, an advanced schedule of preparations and new platforms to encourage synergies, there is hope that more coordination on themes, issues and mutual prayer is possible.

Series of coordinated phases in the same place – Some churches have proposed a model that would gather the churches and ecumenical partners in phases. One model proposes that phase 1 would be 3-day open forum of dialogue and celebration. This would be followed by phase 2, a 5-day space for confessional gatherings. The event would conclude with phase 3, a 5-day WCC assembly. The proposal is based on the assumption that each phase would build upon the previous one.

The same model has been critiqued by some as reinforcing fragmentation by delineating space for the movement (phase 1), the confessions (phase 2) and the WCC (phase3). The model does not adequately address the role of national and regional conciliar instruments. The fact that the two world communions most interested in conducting assembly-type business will hold separate assemblies before 2013, makes it less necessary to provide isolated space for that purpose (this time around).

Inter-related events in a common space and at the same time – From the plethora of discussions, there is a strong interest in the pursuing a WCC-led ecumenical event that will gather the churches and affiliated ecumenical partners. Among the values of such an event is the opportunity for the WCC to provide a preparatory platform for churches and partners with a view toward strengthening the common vision and ownership of the ecumenical movement by the churches in the post-event period.

The event would offer common space for prayer, reflection, discussion and celebration, and would offer appropriately differentiated space “for the purpose of deliberation and/or overall agenda”. The event would offer considerable space to REOs and NCCs to engage the churches on regional concerns, issues and strategies. The event would offer considerable space to church families and CWCs to engage the churches on ecclesial concerns and to encourage each family of churches to strengthen its particular gift to the wider ecumenical movement. The event would offer considerable space to IEOs and SMs to engage the churches in networking ministries, developing common strategies and sharing resources.

The goal of the event would be to strengthen the churches as the primary actors in the search for visible unity and common witness and to strengthen the ecumenical instruments in serving the churches’ commitments. The event would be an opportunity to share the gifts that the churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC all have to offer the wider ecumenical movement.

The meeting could look something like the following:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Opening	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Sunday	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Closing
Opening	Bible	Bible	Bible	Bible	Sunday	Bible	Bible	Bible	Closing
Opening	Dialogue	Dialogue	REO/NCC	CWC	Sunday	WCC	WCC	WCC	Closing
Opening	Dialogue	Dialogue	REO/NCC	CWC	Sunday	WCC	WCC	WCC	Closing
Opening	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Sunday	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Closing
Opening	IEO/SM	CWC	IEO/SM	REO/NCC	Sunday	REO/NCC	CWC	WCC	Closing
Opening	IEO/SM	CWC	IEO/SM	REO/NCC	Sunday	REO/NCC	CWC	WCC	Closing
Opening	Committees	Committees	Committees	Committees	Sunday	Committees	Committees	WCC	Closing
Opening	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Sunday	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Closing

Planning framework

The listening process clearly affirmed that the success of an ecumenical event in 2013 depends on how the event is planned and with whom it is planned. In the past, WCC assemblies were planned by committees representing member churches and did not significantly involve other constituent representatives. The feedback and wisdom of previous experience indicates that already at a planning stage, ecumenical partners, particularly those having a vested interest in a WCC assembly, should be involved.

An ecumenical event seeking to foster the coherence the of the one ecumenical movement will anticipate and inform our understanding of the churches’ search for unity and common witness in a new century. The planning process itself will reflect much of the discussion on Ecumenism in the 21st century. The challenge to plan assemblies differently is a opportunity to test, apply and nurture new styles of ecumenism.

Event Planning Committee – This committee would be responsible for developing the structure, programme and flow of the event. It would represent both churches and ecumenical partners, based on a logic similar to that which helped to form the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century.

The committee would be appointed by the WCC Central Committee in cooperation with ecumenical partners. The committee would report to the WCC Central Committee and liaise with ecumenical

partners. The committee would have approximately 24 members, including 12 member church representatives, 2 REO representatives, 2 NCC representatives, 2 CWC representatives, 2 IEO representatives, 2 SM representatives, 2 sister church representative (Roman Catholic and Pentecostal).

Worship Preparatory Committee – This committee would be responsible for developing the spiritual life of the event, including common prayer, confessional prayer and Bible study. The committee would be appointed by the WCC central committee. The committee members would be church representatives. The committee would work with the event planning committee and would report to the Central Committee. The moderator of the committee would be a member of the event planning committee.

WCC Agenda Committee – The committee would be responsible for developing the business agenda of the WCC assembly, including committees, leadership, nominations, consensus procedures and the desired links between the event and assembly business. The committee would be appointed by the WCC central committee. The committee members would be church representatives. The committee would work with the event planning committee and would report to the central committee. The moderator and other members of the agenda committee would be comprised of the same 12 member church representatives serving on the event planning committee.

IV. Recommendations for consideration by the Officers

The Officers are asked to consider the feasibility of moving forward so as to:

- 1) *Encourage greater coordination on themes, issues and resources among the various churches and ecumenical partners holding major events between 2011 and 2015. The advanced schedule of preparations helps to make this possible.*
- 2) *Commit to a WCC-led ecumenical event in 2013 that will gather the churches and affiliated ecumenical partners; and be prepared collaboratively with a view toward strengthening the common vision and ownership of the ecumenical movement by the churches in the post-event period. The event would offer common space for prayer, reflection, discussion and celebration, and would offer differentiated space for deliberation and decision-making.*
- 3) *Appoint a new committee structure in February 2008 to plan the ecumenical event, worship and WCC business, respectively.*

The Officers are also asked to make concrete suggestions as to how this paper should be revised and recommendations be drafted so as to facilitate deliberation by the central committee.

V. Appendices

The four appendices mentioned in the report are included below:

- 01 – ‘Towards a common global ecumenical assembly?’ by Stephen Brown
- 02 – WCC General Secretary’s letter requesting feedback
- 03 – List of churches and partners responding to the request for feedback
- 04 – Draft schedule of preparation for the next assembly

01 – ‘Towards a common global ecumenical assembly?’ by Stephen Brown

See *The Ecumenical Review*, July-October 2006, published by the World Council of Churches.
Copies available upon request.

Appendix 02 – WCC General Secretary’s letter requesting feedback

To: WCC Member Churches, Regional and Associate Councils, Christian World Communions, Specialized Ministries and International Ecumenical Organisations

Re: The next WCC assembly

Geneva, April 2007

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ!

Among the recommendations of the Porto Alegre assembly was to pursue an “ecumenical assembly that would assemble all churches to celebrate their fellowship in Jesus Christ and to address common challenges facing the church and humanity” (Report of the Policy Reference Committee, paragraph 5).

This recommendation was supported by the assembly principally as a witness “toward visible unity and a shared Eucharist”, but also as a practical challenge to “explore the feasibility of a structure for WCC assemblies that would provide expanded space for Christian World Communions and confessional families to meet, for the purpose of deliberation and/or overall agenda” (Report of the Policy Reference Committee, paragraph 25d).

The Assembly requested that this be further deliberated early in the term of the Central Committee.

The feasibility of a WCC assembly gathering all churches and offering expanded space for Christian World Communions was initially discussed by the Central Committee in September 2006. The matter was referred to the Executive Committee for further discussion with the expectation that an initial recommendation come to the Central Committee meeting in 2008 for consideration.

In February this year the Executive Committee elaborated the discussion and requested that advice be sought from the fellowship of WCC member churches, regional and associate councils, specialized ministries and international ecumenical organisations. The concerns addressed by the Executive Committee, and on which feedback is now requested, include:

A common vision

From the initial discussions, there is an apparent interest in pursuing **a WCC assembly that would gather all churches and offer expanded space to partner ecumenical organisations**. This is the vision of a broad-based WCC assembly that would invite not only Christian World Communions, but other churches and ecumenical partners to gather in support of the one ecumenical movement.

- 1. Does this language adequately describe the vision of a gathering that brings together the widest platform of Christian churches and organizations in an expression of visible unity? Does this vision resonate with your church’s or organisation’s ecumenical calling?*
- 2. Is an assembly of the WCC the best environment in which to manifest commitment to both the fellowship of member churches and the one ecumenical movement?*
- 3. How would such an intentionally broadened WCC assembly strengthen the fellowship of member churches in their search for visible unity?*

Stewardship and commitment

It has been reported that the plethora of ecumenical and confessional assemblies has become not only a financial burden for many churches and ecumenical partners, but a burden on the human resources of the churches. Additionally the lack of coherence around themes, agendas, resources and worship material has been critiqued by some.

1. *Is the current cycle of ecumenical and confessional assemblies a burden on your church or organisation, and if so, why?*
2. *Is your church or organisation committed to sharing your resources and to collaborate on study processes and the preparation of resources that are necessary to sustain a WCC assembly that offers expanded space to all churches and other partners?*
3. *Is your church or organisation committed to the idea of pursuing a WCC assembly that would gather all churches and offer expanded space to partner ecumenical organisations?*

The ecumenical landscape has changed significantly in recent years and will continue to change as new forms and models of ecclesial unity emerge, as bi-lateral dialogues mature and as the mechanisms for ecumenical engagement in Diakonia and development are transformed. An assembly of the World Council of Churches is among the largest and most representative gatherings of churches committed to the search for visible unity. Assemblies, as per the WCC Rules, give priority to the fellowship of member churches to review and set future directions. And yet the World Council of Churches is not the only institutional context in which the wider fellowship of churches expresses its commitment to visible unity.

The Porto Alegre assembly, in articulating the vision of an ‘ecumenical assembly’, has led us to reconsider the nature of WCC assemblies as the most significant global platform, not only for gathering the fellowship of member churches, but also for fostering the coherence of the one ecumenical movement by involving more intentionally councils of churches, confessional bodies, diaconal ministries and other international ecumenical initiatives.

Your response to these issues will help to inform the subsequent reflection of the Executive Committee and thereby strengthen the Central Committee discussion in February 2008. We look forward to receiving your feedback on this matter before 1 August 2007 if possible.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia
General Secretary

Cc: Members of Central Committee

03 – List of churches and partners responding to the request for feedback

Member Churches

1. Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia
2. Christian Bible Church (Argentina)
3. Church of Norway
4. Church of Sweden
5. Episcopal Church (USA)
6. Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil
7. Evangelical Lutheran Church In Denmark
8. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
9. Evangelical Church of the Rheinland
10. Evangelical Church of the Rio Plate (Argentina/Uruguay)
11. Evangelical Church of Germany
12. Methodist Church in Ireland
13. Moravian Church (Europe)
14. Old Catholic Church in the Netherlands
15. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
16. Protestant Church in the Netherlands
17. Reformed Church in France
18. United Reformed Church (UK)
19. United Church of Christ in Japan
20. United Protestant Church in Belgium

Councils, Communions and Specialized Ministries

21. Anglican Communion Office
22. ICCO
23. Kerkinactie
24. Lutheran World Federation
- 25.** National Council of Churches in the Netherlands
26. Reformed Ecumenical Council
27. World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Appendix 04 – Draft schedule of preparations for the next assembly

The following draft schedule of preparations was received by the WCC central committee in September 2006 as part of the assembly evaluation (Doc GEN 03). It is based on the assumption that the 10th Assembly will be held in late 2013.

Central Committee meeting in February 2008

- Elaborate basic expectations for the 10th Assembly
- Appoint an Assembly Planning Committee
- Appoint an Assembly Worship Planning Committee
- Initiate venue search

Central Committee meeting in August 2009

- Decide on Assembly theme
- Decide on Assembly venue
- Confirm the Assembly budget
- Map the distribution of delegates

Central Committee meeting in February 2011

- Confirm the Assembly programme and draft agenda
- Issue invitations
- Launch congregational resources

Central Committee meeting in August 2012

- Confirm member church delegations
- Nominate additional delegates according to the 15% process
- Nominate Assembly leadership
- Launch Assembly study materials

If the Assembly is held in early 2013, all matters of action must be presented to the meeting of the Central Committee in February 2011.